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# Happy Faces

A Thesis Presented

By

LISA TUCKER

**MAY 2021**

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# Happy Faces

A Thesis Presented

By

LISA TUCKER

Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies  
Bridgewater State University  
Bridgewater, Massachusetts

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Teaching

In Visual Arts

MAY 2021

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## ABSTRACT

“Happy Faces” is a series of sculptural masks which explore the layered facades people construct to hide their vulnerabilities or to please others. Each mask represents a vice; these are the unhealthy habits that allow people to escape their everyday lives and pressures. I have created these masks out of found materials which relate to each vice in question. Through this work, I examine the concepts of escapism and duality. My studio investigation influences my pedagogical approach in the way I interact with my students and manage my classroom, both in how I embrace process and experiment with my use of mixed media and by approaching students as individuals. My hope is to create a place for students to be creative and a safe space for them to take off or at least lift their mask.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the Graduate Committee who has supported and challenged me through this thesis process. Leigh Craven, Amy Lovera, Mary Dondero, and Andres Montenegro Rosero have been my Graduate Committee for my Thesis this year. They consistently provided guidance and suggestions which have had a positive impact on me through this process.

Leigh Craven has been my Graduate Advisor during my tenure at Bridgewater State University, providing guidance and encouragement as I continued to further my education and focus in the mixed media area.

Mary Dondero, a member of my Graduate Committee and was my Graphic Design professor. She guided me to think differently when I was ‘stuck’ in my work. I was able to create work I was proud of once I could better see my end goals. Mary has provided mentoring long after I completed her course which has helped me a great deal.

Andres Montenegro Rosero has provided unique insight into my work. As an Art History professor, he was able to provide guidance on my research and provided ideas for me to pursue which proved to be very beneficial.

Amy Lovera, while also a member of my Graduate Committee has been my Thesis Advisor. She has challenged me, has allowed me to explore my creativity and has guided me through this experience. She has had a profound impact on me as an artist as she continued to provide steady inspiration for me to think outside my comfort zone. She reinforced that the experimentation that was done in this effort, while it did not achieve

the desired results, it did achieve a deeper understanding of my craft and how to take an unexpected result and turn it into a creative outcome. I hope that one day I'm able to provide the level of guidance and support to my students that Amy has shown me this year.

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## ARTIST STATEMENT

I create conceptual mixed media sculpture using found materials. I make artwork that encourages people to think about the uncomfortable things we don't often talk about. My artwork uses visual/verbal puns that relate the concept of the work to the material used to create it.

In this project I am exploring the concepts of duality, escapism and vice through research and a series of masks that will depict different vices. Each mask will represent a vice that is used as an escape from the reality of everyday life. These vices include smoking, sex, drinking, gambling and drug abuse. The intention of my work is for the viewer to think about the uncomfortable truths and realities about the vices that my work portrays.

## INTRODUCTION

We all wear a mask. Every day, we want to show our best selves to the world. We want to be liked and accepted. We want the world to see our Happy Face. But what is really going on behind that mask? What is behind the happy face? This project will delve into what is behind the face through the creation of a series of masks. In this thesis, I present research I performed on virtue, vices, escapism and duality to see their relationship as well as their impact to our daily lives. I have created a series of masks that represent a variety of vices. These masks show the vice that no one sees behind the face. I intend for these masks to allow the viewer to ponder the deeper meaning behind the mask and consider that there is more to a person than what we see on their happy face.

My project includes an investigation into artists who have displayed their concepts through the use of materials with dual meanings. Also, I explore periods in art history such as Dada where artists used materials to provoke reactions through their art. Some of their works were meant to show rebellion against societal norms while others were meant to evoke an emotion. Dada artists Raoul Hausmann, John Heartfield and George Grosz used a variety of materials including ready-made found objects to make a political statement. Contemporary artist, Nick Cave also uses found materials to create mixed media sculpture which shows the Duality of life. Damien Hirst is another artist who focuses on the duality of good and evil, including Christian concepts of Heaven and Hell through his art. I will also look into the psychological area of duality and the implications of hiding behind vices.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The physical aspect of this project consists of a series of masks constructed using a variety of found materials. These masks are covered in materials to represent different vices people use to escape the pressures of life. The vices I explore are smoking, alcohol, sex, drug abuse and gambling. Some of the materials used to cover and construct the masks are lottery tickets, cigarettes, poker chips and other found materials related to each vice.

I experimented with different methods of display which allow for viewers to interact with the artwork. Possible display solutions include organizing and mounting the masks on the wall, laying the masks out on the floor, and suspending them from the ceiling. Each method creates a different experience for the viewer to view and or interact with the artwork.

## PROCESS / DESIGN APPROACH

In my artistic process, I begin with an idea. I take some time to develop the idea conceptually, thinking about the different meanings the idea could convey as well as how to best visualize it as well as how it can be displayed. I then begin looking into the different materials I want to use, what materials will best depict the idea, and add to the meaning of the idea. Once I have finalized the materials I want to use for the work, I then begin the art making process. The project may evolve once I start working with the materials; the materials may dictate the evolution of the work. If the materials aren't working with the original idea or aren't conveying the intended message, the materials may change. Once the artwork is finished, I reevaluate how the work will be displayed. With the evolution of the work, I ask myself, does the original idea for display still work or does it need to be modified?

When I began this project, I was initially focused on using a form of the human face to create molds which I could then cast as the masks. While doing this, I also experimented with a wide variety of materials. My overall intent was to create a mask using the form of the human face which would display the vice by adhering the found objects to the cast mask.

Like many artists who work with mixed media, I collect and save any everyday item that I think I can use in a future project. I see an item like a beer bottle cap and ponder what work I can use it in. This goes with many everyday items that most people would consider trash, or something to recycle. I am recycling them into my art. Some materials I have been collecting for a few years. Like the bottle caps, collecting them at

parties and contacting local bartenders. Materials like lottery tickets and scratch tickets have been collected over the last 6 months. Everything that is used in Happy Faces is an item that was manufactured for purposes other than my art. These items will tie into the theme of the vice of each mask. Using readymade found materials to comment on consumer culture dates back to the Dada movement. I explore these roots later in my thesis when I discuss my influences.

### **Project Mishaps and Failed Experiments**

I worked through many experiments with various materials. Initially, I used store bought plastic masks of the human face as a mold to create forms that I could adhere found objects to. In this manner, I could adhere materials that would represent each vice to the surface of the facial form, evaluating their fit, texture and stability. Although the materials were not the same that I would use for the final product, these created good examples of what would and would not work.

My first attempts were with air-dry clay. Once using the plastic form to create the mask then using it to create a mold to cast and create a mask. I utilized plaster strips and created several forms this way. My early experimentation included attempts to put the mask materials directly into the plaster as well. I used candy wrappers to create the “candy-coated” mask by adhering them to the plaster as it set. While the process was successful, it did not create the visual I was looking for.



Fig. 1: Candy Wrapper Mask Experiment



Fig. 2: Air-Dry Clay Mask Experiment

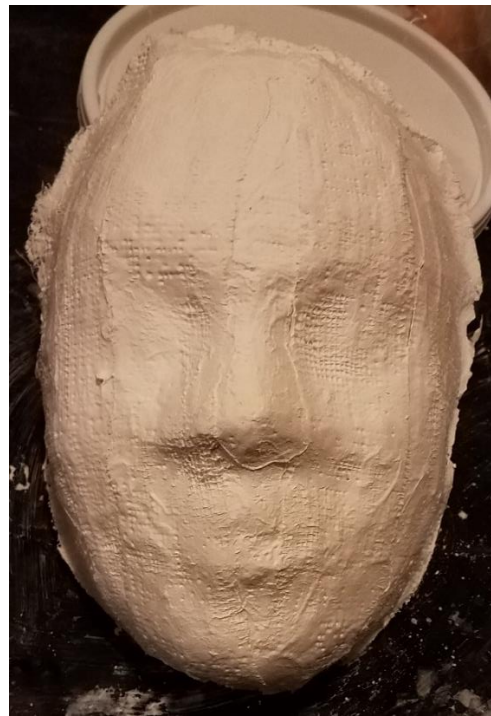


Fig. 3: Plaster Strips Mask Experiment



The plaster was a good medium for a face, but not for the mask. For these forms to become a mask, the eyes needed to be cut out. I continued to experiment with materials other than plaster to determine the best one for the mask base. I created molds using mold compound which allowed me to create a more lifelike face – but again they were faces and not masks. The plaster worked well with the mold and created very clear faces to be used for the mask base. I experimented with attempting to create a face using resin where I put the candy wrappers in the resin while it set. This face/mask did not dry clear but was a very good experiment using a new material. It was durable and lifelike but was not a mask as there was no way to remove the eyes. The experiments did not yield a product that would be a feasible mask. I experimented with several forms but was using the same base for the face mask. While I was able to create a very lifelike face, this was not a mask.



Fig. 4: Resin Mask Experiment, Front    Fig. 5: Resin Mask Experiment, Back

## **Shifting my Focus**

The intent of the effort needed to shift to better express the message I want it to send – the vice and the happy face. I performed research on masks which included the history of masks; how masks were used in various cultures. I found that my focus to use the shape of the human face to be the mask was not allowing me to see the possibilities of what a mask can be. The mask is not the face and it can cover any part of the head, not just the face.

One major influence in my thesis art making process has been wearable art, mixed media artist, Lyle Reimer. He helped change my perspective toward mask making. Looking at his work helped shift my work from mask making and the facial form to making wearable art to be worn on the head and face. Viewing his work empowered me to think differently about how I wanted to portray the vices. His work inspired me to push my own boundaries in my art making and think further about what a mask could become as wearable art.

Through this experimentation and the introduction of Lyle Reimer, it helped me understand that I was focused on the face and not the mask as well as the wide variety of possibilities to create ‘wearable art’. I was able to refocus on the form of mask itself with no connection to the shape of a face other than that the mask will cover some or all of a face. This also allowed me a much more creative approach to the mask as something that will be over the face versus being the face. Using this perspective has allowed me to experiment with the found materials I collected more creatively. This inspired me to

utilize materials differently. Many of the objects I used became the structure for the mask as opposed to an adornment.

## RESEARCH AND INFLUENCES

### Vices and Virtue

Vices are defined as immoral or wicked acts or behavior. <sup>[1]</sup> They are something that is habitual and is considered a personal defect or shortcoming and imperfection. A vice is also viewed to be an abnormal behavior pattern which is considered harmful to one's emotional or physical health. Some vices are also considered illegal as well as immoral. Vices are also viewed as moral weaknesses as well as self-indulgent. The key concept of the vices is that they are habitual versus a one-time event and can be harmful to a person's wellbeing.

In medieval times, a stark contrast existed between vice and virtue. From the twelfth century, a philosophical connection of virtue was seen as an acquired habit. A virtue was seen as a religious ideal and the religious leaders of the time deemed it to be a divine gift. The vice was defined in theology as the absence of virtue. These ideas have earlier foundations, philosophers who followed Aristotle determined that virtue was seen as two opposite "vices," one representing excess, the other represented a lack of the virtuous qualities. <sup>[2]</sup> These vices which are viewed as a moral weakness or harmful are portrayed in my sex mask, *Candied Cocks*. They display the view of the person that stays behind the happy face, out of the public eye, and always hidden from view as they are not socially acceptable activities and can be harmful to their wellbeing.



Fig. 6: *Candied Cocks*

## **Vices and Escapism**

The habitual diversion of a purely imaginary activity is considered an escape from reality or daily routine. [\[3\]](#) Escapists are people who want to create their own reality while they go about their daily lives. While escapism can be as simple as daydreaming, daydreams don't tend to happen intentionally; they happen quite naturally and are not considered a habitual behavior.

Escapism is the ability to distinguish fantasy from reality and the ability to indulge safely in that fantasy without distorting the understanding of reality. Today, we are faced with more reality than most people can handle, including our everyday pressures of family, jobs, and societal demands. We have also found more ways to escape that reality. We have found many ways to ignore or reject reality and find the escape that provides the relief from reality into the realm of fantasy. The better someone becomes at distinguishing fantasy from reality, the more they can indulge safely in fantasies without distorting their reality. Some people use this escape productively in their lives. Taking on a role in a play where you can become someone you are not, could be viewed as a safe escape. [\[4\]](#)

Escapism becomes dangerous when the habitual behavior causes emotional or physical harm to oneself or to another. The escape is no longer a daydream or theater but a distortion of reality that is destructive. Often, these individuals try to hide their escapist behavior from others. The stress of the escape can equal that of the reality of their lives which compounds the impact to them physically and emotionally. This creates a guilty conscience and great anxiety. The escaper now has a duality in their lives, the escape



behavior and the reality of their lives. The escapism transitions from being a healthy escape to being a dangerous vice.

My mask *Sin City Sucker*, representing gambling, portrays this type of vice.

Gambling can move from controlled and harmless game playing at the casino to becoming obsession, where an individual can lose everything. There is an adrenalin high that creates the feeling that the win is about to happen, but generally never does.



Fig. 7: *Sin City Sucker*

## Duality in Art

Duality is defined as the quality or state of having two different or opposite parts or elements. Duality is considered a difference between two opposite things or the combining of two opposite things. [\[5\]](#) We have a concept of Duality in our lives when we are portraying ourselves as one person, but behind that portrayal is someone very different. This is a controlled portrayal where the person shows the self they want others to see and know, while in reality they are also something completely different. In the right circumstance they take on the reality needed for that moment.

In art, we have many opportunities to express duality. This is the creative choice of the artist based on the intent of the work. Artists are able to express duality through the use of their chosen media, the subjects used as well as contrast or juxtaposition of the materials. Artists use a variety of media and approaches to create the duality in their work. For example, color can be seen as a unifying element in a painting and can also create deep contrasts. An artist can also use a contrast of subject to express duality juxtaposing subjects completely opposite of what appears to be the main subject or theme. My masks will display the ugly truth behind the happy faces by using materials that may appear as creating an attractive mask, but upon deeper review, the materials will also show the darker side. The *Sin City Sucker* mask appears very festive, but upon closer inspections, there are many losing lottery tickets and poker hands displayed. The drug abuse mask, *Pouring Pills*, looks colorful and cohesive but is also deadly; the quantity of the various drugs in the mask pouring out of a used pill bottle could kill someone if taken.



There is duality in this thesis in that the paper portrays the negative aspects of the vices, but the artwork seems to celebrate or glamorize the vices.



Fig. 8: *Pouring Pills*

Duality in art can be seen in the artists intent for the artwork verse the viewers perception of the artwork. Different people will interpret the masks differently based on their different backgrounds, beliefs, experiences, upbringings. For example, when

looking at the *Candied Cocks* mask, seeing the candy necklace like edible underwear, a parent may associate that type of candy with children and may be offput by the work being about sex and associating the materials with childhood. The artwork then takes on a completely different meaning. As opposed to a single person who does not have children may associate that materials with parties or raves and the use of that material in artwork about sex might seem logical.

Damien Hirst is an artist who has approached the realm of duality. He uses manufactured items as the focus of his work. His work, *Gold Tears*, was made using glaze and foil blocks which display rows of diamonds on a gold shelf. Diamonds are often a sign of perfection and wealth. Hirst's intent was to show the duality of the diamond. But diamonds can also show loss and sadness. He wanted to show that outer beauty does not translate to perfection. Another work of Hirst, *Hell* has rows of stubbed out cigarettes and one very expensive Cuban cigar. The image is not as pleasant as diamonds but does show the contrast between life and death or beauty and pain. [\[6\]](#)



Fig. 9: *Gold Tears* by Damien Hirst  
<https://www.guyhepner.com/duality-damien-hirsts-art/>

An example of my artwork that incorporates duality in a similar way to Damien Hirst is *Sharp Peaces*. The meaning behind this piece is to say that peace does not always come peacefully. That having, finding, making, and keeping peace is not easy, often hard, and sometimes painful. I utilized the imagery of the dove and olive branch to represent having peace. I used the nails and blades to represent the hard, rough, and sharpness that comes with peace. The nails for the belly of the dove are fallen over in different directions, sort of knocked around to create tension and unrest, symbolizing the struggle felt when finding peace.



Fig. 10: *Sharp Peaces*

Rachel Perry is an artist whose work includes installations and photography. Much of her work focuses on Consumerism through the use of store bought or found materials. Perry created a series of self-portrait photographs called *'Lost in my Life'*, where her body is obscured by objects that are part of her everyday life, almost hidden in those objects. The masks I have created also obscure the wearer behind the mask as well as the vice.





Fig. 11: *'Lost in My Life'* By Rachel Perry  
<https://www.rachelperrystudio.com/>

Perry will re-use anything at her disposal; items we would normally consider trash. Items used could be the twist tie on a bread bag as well as the bag itself, takeout containers and used aluminum foil. She will use any found item and she will find a way to incorporate it in her work. Similarly, I will look at most items in my everyday life to determine if it is something I can use in a current or future work. A great deal of the materials for Happy Faces are ones I have collected over the past couple of years with the intent to use them in future work. I have incorporated artwork that I have done in the past

into the *Beer Blossoms* mask where I utilized bottle caps to create flowers which represent the alcohol flowing from a broken beer bottle.



Fig. 12: Roses



Fig. 13: Sunflowers

## Uses of Masks

Masks have been used for centuries for a wide variety of purposes; protection, decoration, entertainment, religions headdress, as a disguise and as art. They can be very elaborate when used as ceremonial headdress or practical as in the N95 protective mask that has become part of our everyday lives during the Covid-19 Pandemic. During

wartime, the mask is a form of protection for the face itself. The concept also applies to sports, for example, where the hockey goalie has a mask worn with the helmet.



Fig. 14: 16<sup>th</sup> Century Plague Doctor Mask

<https://coil.com/p/deyner1984/Face-masks-history-from-ancient-times-to-present-days/JK2lYsGNh>

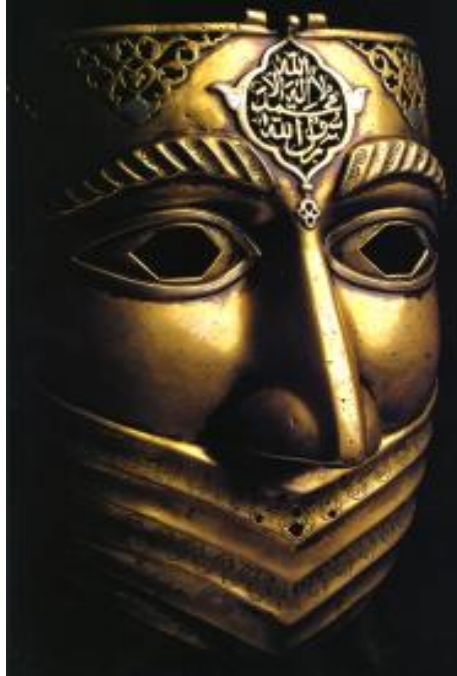


Fig. 15: Persian War Mask, Safavid Dynasty, 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries  
<https://www.maskmuseum.org/masks-in-history>



**maiden spirit mask**

Maiden spirit mask symbolizing beauty and peacefulness, painted wood, southern Igbo Ekpe society, Nigeria; in the Nigerian Museum, Lagos. Height 21.3 cm.

*Image: Frank Willett*

Fig. 16: Maiden Spirit Mask



Masks are worn on the face, sometimes completely covering the face and others as only a portion of the face being covered. Some masks extend well beyond the head and some will cover other body parts along with the face. Based on the intended use for the mask, the appearance will change. Form and function being the driving consideration. The outward view is the same; you can't see behind the mask and the viewer must create their own interpretation of who is behind it and in some cases, why they are behind it.

I have investigated many types of masks and their uses as considerations on how I created the masks for Happy Faces. They are views into what the vice behind the Happy Face is and how to best use the materials to convey the vice. Some are provocative while others will appear whimsical. I hope all of my masks provoke questions from those who view them. My *Sin City Sucker* mask appears to be the headdress of the Las Vegas showgirl that is full of life and fun. The reality of the mask is the variety of winning poker hands and all losing lottery tickets. The fun of the gamble turns into a losing streak upon a deeper view of the mask.

Artists who have impacted my work are those whose work cause me to think about the message the work is sending. Art is emotional for me. I make art that makes the viewer ask questions. I have gravitated to artists that are doing the same.

### **Influences in Art History**

*Dada was an art movement formed during the First World War In Zurich in negative reaction to the horrors and folly of the war. The art, poetry and performance produced by dada artists is often satirical and nonsensical in nature.*  
[\[7\]](#)

The Dada movement was known as being anti-art. Dadaists rejected and antagonized the current values of visual art in their era. Many of the ideas they introduced were considered subversive at the time but are now seen as mainstream. These included the creation of art from 'found objects' or 'ready-mades', and the introduction of 3-D collage. Some credit Conceptual Art and Performance Art to the Dada movement. They were very much ahead of their time.

Dada was also anti-establishment and intentionally provocative. The artists in that era wanted art to have meaning again. They worked to attack previous art as well as the art institution that controlled what artists created and displayed as well as the money that it generated. Dadaists utilized normal, everyday objects and explored their forms to create works of art. Some were viewed as spontaneous, some as nonsense and others were absurd. But this was also their reaction to WW1 as they felt it was illogical, chaotic and irrational. They felt the need to display that the capitalism at the time was the creator of the War. The Dadaists stirred controversy in the culture of the time through their art. They wanted to engage the newer artists at the time and did this using humor as well as being more inquisitive. Many artists used what they called, 'ready-mades', using common, manufactured everyday items that were destined for garbage as the focal point or media of their artwork. This made a statement by using the material items of the consumer culture against them.

Claes Oldenburg is an artist I found many years ago while performing research. I found his work fascinating and impactful, as it made me think about its' intent. Oldenburg is known for creating extremely large sculptures of everyday items and

putting them in very unconventional, unrelated places: a badminton Shuttlecock (birdie) in the middle of a field. His work is impossible to pass by without wondering about it. The same could be said about the large, 6-foot fork he planted in the front of a mansion (at their request). It creates conversation. It brings people together in that discussion. The oversized sculptures he creates are all proportionately correct while being exceedingly large. He has also created many soft sculptures of everyday objects such as food. Many of his works were commissioned and took a collaboration of engineers and builders to assist in the final product creation and then location of the pieces. All of Oldenburg's work provokes a response and causes the viewer to pause and wonder. Similarly, I want my art to start conversations.



Fig. 17: *Shuttlecocks*, 1994  
<http://oldenburgvanbruggen.com/largescaleprojects/shuttlecocks.htm>

Lyle Reimer is a Canadian mixed media artist with a focus on wearable art and make-up design. He uses his own face and head as the base for his art which then become photographic self-portraits. His creative use of materials as well as the ability to display his art on his own face allowed me to take a step back from my work to really evaluate my process and perspective. Like me, Reimer also uses found items creatively in his art. He finds an item that appeals to him and then finds an imaginative way to incorporate it in his art. Reimer took the thought; one man's trash is another man's treasure to heart. His work includes anything he finds that would be trash such as old newspapers, art scraps, wrapping paper. His head pieces are more theatrical than meaningful but have allowed me to think much more creatively about how to use materials to create the form of my masks as well as how to present them.



Fig. 18: *Not A Match*, 2020 By Lyle Reimer  
<https://www.kostuikgallery.com/project/not-a-match/>

Nick Cave is a Chicago based artist who perceives himself as an educator and messenger who uses both performance and visual art. His '*Soundsuit*' was originally created after the beating of Rodney King in 1991. His initial creation was started with one twig. He then added more and more until he had created a complete body of armor using only twigs he found on the ground. The '*Soundsuit*' was created in a lifelike size of his body but is completely covered to conceal his race, gender and class. This forces the viewer to look without the ability to judge the person, as some of these '*Soundsuits*' are

utilized in live performance. Cave has created numerous '*Soundsuits*' that are both free standing creations and ones created as a costume worn in a performance. I recently viewed his '*Soundsuit 2009*' at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston and was immediately drawn to the creation. Nick Cave's *Soundsuits* are in some ways a form of protections. They are something the wearer can hide behind. Similarly in Happy Faces, the wearer can hide behind their vices as a form of protection, hiding one's vulnerabilities behind their vice. His use of found materials to create the effect was amazing and inspiring for me as an artist.



Fig. 19: *Soundsuit* by Nick Cave  
[www.icaboston.org/art/nick-cave/soundsuit](http://www.icaboston.org/art/nick-cave/soundsuit).

In the early 1900's, Dada artist John Heartfield, in partnership with George Grosz created numerous works of art. John Heartfield was a Dada artist, who mostly worked in photomontage, collaborated with George Grosz to create *The Middle-Class Philistine Heartfield Gone Wild (Electro-Mechanical Tatlin Sculpture)*. This piece is a mixed media sculpture made to confront the viewer about the reality and horror of WW1. I found this

work very powerful and emotional to look at. I also viewed this work from the perspective of its form. Heartfield and Grosz utilized found, manufactured items to construct the sculpture starting from the mannequin, then creating the almost bionic person representing the soldier returning from war.

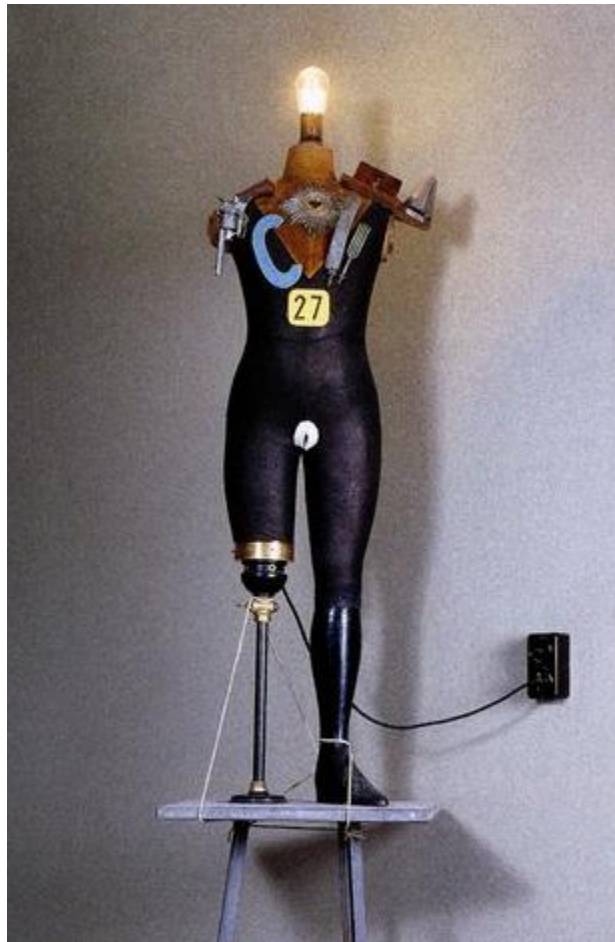


Fig. 20: *The Middle-Class Philistine* Heartfield Gone Wild  
(*Electro-Mechanical Tatlin Sculpture*)  
<http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/history-of-art/dada.htm>.

Similar to Rachel Perry, Dada artist Hannah Hoch, took the materials she worked with at her job at a fashion magazine to create rebellious art. Hoch took magazines home and deconstructed them. She turned the material on itself making photo-montage collages



that used images from the magazines to show how the media portrayed women. While Hoch was a Dada artist, her work was more culturally political as opposed to governmentally political in its intent while staying true to the use of found and ready-made materials in her art.



Fig. 21: *Da-Dandy*, 1919 By Hannah Hoch  
<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-hannah-hoch-artist>

The artists and time periods noted have had an impact on how I approach the artwork I create. Each one had a unique style to their work that had some relevance to the artwork I have created. The Dada artists use of found, manufactured materials related to the work itself, as the use of the art to create a reaction is very much in line with the art I am creating. The masks have been constructed using found, manufactured items. The manufactured materials used are related to the vice being portrayed in the mask, similar to how Hannah Hoch and Rachel Perry used items to turn on themselves.

I strive to create work that evokes an emotion and causes the viewer to think about my message. I want my viewer to see and feel the visceral impact of what a vice can do to a person. I want them to acknowledge that these vices are hiding a problem that needs to be talked about.

## ARTWORK

### **Smoke Signals**

The *Smoke Signals* mask represents someone who uses smoking as an escapism vice. They could be escaping work, boredom or any uncomfortable situation, using smoking as an unhealthy escape. *Smoke Signals* was designed to appear as a large plume of smoke coming from the mouth of someone smoking a cigarette. This mask was created using cigarettes, fine wire, fine screen, heavy wire, and thermo-plastic fabric called Fosshape that is moldable when heated. A pair of glasses was affixed to the backing of the work to allow it to be worn. The wearer cannot see completely through the smoke but can see through the tiny separation between cigarette rows.

To construct the plume of smoke, each cigarette was connected using fine wire. Once each row was completed, it was affixed to the fine screen using small brackets made of fine wire. This helped create the shaping of the plume. The Fosshape was used to create backing and bend of the structure. Heavy wire was attached to the Fosshape to provide support. Weights were added to the bottom to provide stability. A fine layer of tobacco was added to the backing to make it a 360-degree piece of artwork.



Fig. 22: *Smoke Signals*, front view





Fig. 23: *Smoke Signals*, back view

## **Beer Blossoms**

The *Beer Blossoms* mask represents the blurred view and happy disposition of someone who is inebriated. *Beer Blossoms* is constructed using 2 pairs of sunglasses, a broken beer bottle, flowers made from beer caps, jewelry wire and glue.

The *Beer Blossoms* base is the connection of the 2 pairs of sunglasses, one of which are readers which creates a distorted view when looking through the mask, similar to someone who is under the influence of alcohol. These glasses were combined to provide some stability to the weight of the beer bottle. There is a broken beer bottle affixed to the top of the glasses. Several flowers flowing from the broken bottle that were created using discarded beer caps. The flowers are held together with jewelry wire and glue.



Fig. 24: *Beer Blossoms*

## **Sin City Sucker**

The *Sin City Sucker* mask was designed to be in the likeness of a Vegas showgirl headdress. It is very flowy and whimsical with feathers and glitter. The mask contains playing cards, lottery tickets and poker chips. The playing cards in the plumes are all winning poker hands except for the hand directly over the forehead. Similar to playing poker, not all hands are big winners, but they are motivation to keep playing. The final hand in the front, like all of the lottery tickets, is a losing hand.

*Sin City Sucker* is constructed using chicken wire, dowels and 2 visors that provided the base for the playing card hands, the lottery tickets, the poker chips and the boa. The chicken wire was cut to create the backing for each plume and was sewn onto the front visor with a dowel then connected to the chicken wire to create stability. A second visor was then attached to the back of the visor and plumes to create additional stability. The cards and lottery tickets were attached to the front of the chicken wire using glue. Feather boas were attached to the back of each plume. Poker chips were strung together using jewelry jump rings. The completed poker chip veil was attached to the visor using hot glue. A feather boa on the visor completed the work.





Fig. 25: *Sin City Sucker*



Fig. 26: *Sin City Sucker*, close up

## **Pouring Pills**

The *Pouring Pills* mask was created to represent the vice of overusing medication. The mask form is showing the pills falling out of the pill bottle and flowing down the face in great quantity, appearing as a steady flow of medication.

*Pouring Pills* was constructed using Fosshape as the base. The Fosshape material was formed using one of the previously created plaster faces as a base. The pills were assembled using the same plaster face to insure they would align when attached to the Fosshape. A wide variety of over-the-counter medications were used to build the face of the mask. Each pill was individually attached to plastic wrap over the plaster face using hot glue as this was the only adhesive that did not breakdown the medication coating. The pill layer was then glued to the Fosshape base. Fine wire connects the pill bottle to the base. The pill bottle is suspended from the forehead with the pills flowing down the wearer's face. *Pouring Pills* is held onto the face using elastic around the ear.





Fig. 27: *Pouring Pills*



Fig. 28: *Pouring Pills*

## **Candied Cocks**

The *Candied Cocks* mask represents the person who is using sex as a vice. You can see through the mask as this type of vice does not distort their vision, but more so it distorts their behavior. People who use sex as a vice view other people as objects of their sexual desire. They cannot control the behavior and it may become obsessive as a pleasure-seeking vice.

*Candied Cocks* is constructed using edible candy underwear and condoms. The underwear provides the base for the mask. A variety of condoms were attached to the underwear using hot glue to complete the mask. The condoms on the outside of the mask are all white and are blown up to various sizes. There is one red condom placed over the mouth. The hot glue was found to be the only adhesive that would attach the condoms with the underwear without damaging any of the components.





Fig. 29: *Candied Cocks*

## DISPLAY

My vision for my thesis work is to display it in a gallery. Each mask would be suspended from the ceiling at the eye level of an adult. This will give the viewer the opportunity to walk around to see both sides of the mask, from the perspective of the viewer and the wearer. The viewer will be able to experience the mask as if they were wearing it as well as view someone else wearing it.

I realize now in retrospect, that the stoic plaster casts of the faces I made in the beginning of my research, can be used as well. These can be displayed on the wall as the Happy Face. The viewer can't see behind the face on the wall and can't see what the face is hiding. The viewer will not be able to experience or interact with the happy face the same way they can interact with the vice masks. They are not able to stand behind the happy face masks as the wearer the way they can with the vice masks.



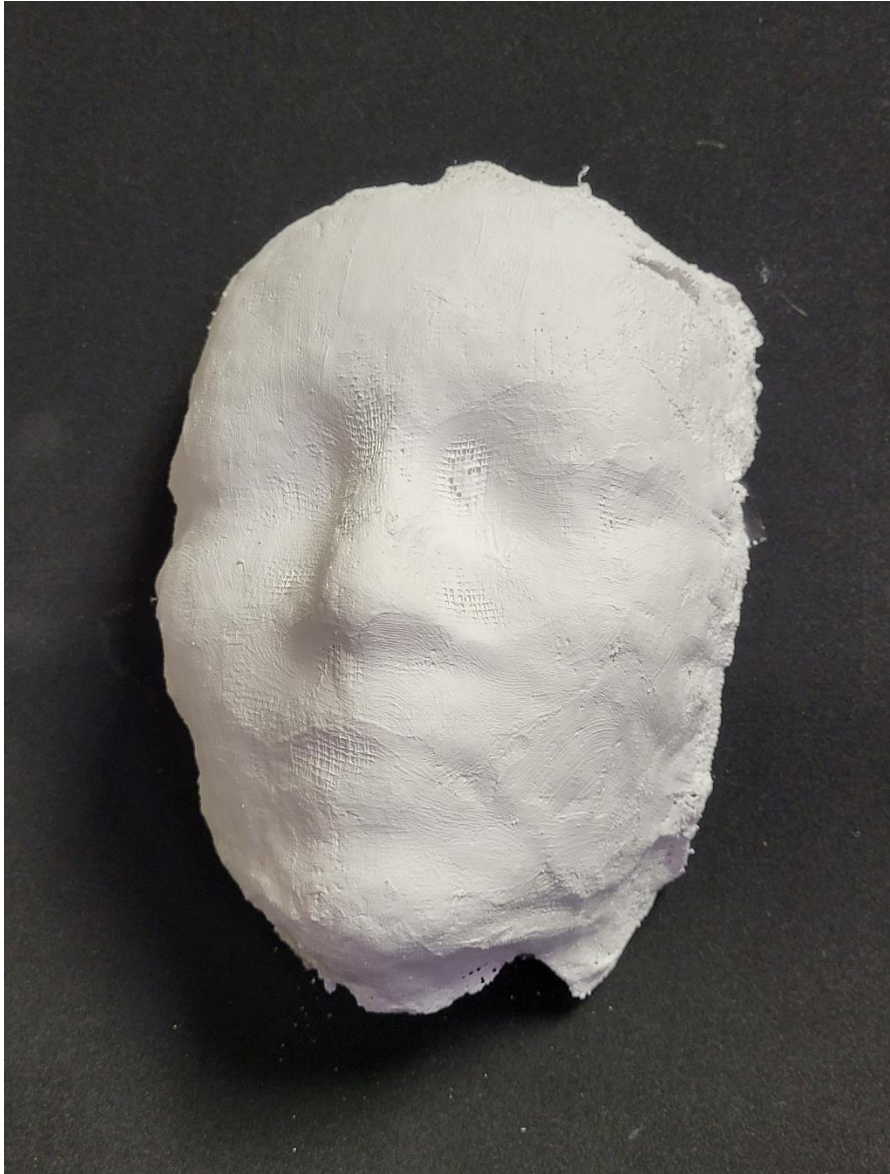


Fig. 30: *Happy Face*

For my thesis presentation, I have taken photographs of each mask from a variety of angles to show the construction and components. I have also taken photos of each mask as it is being worn as this is wearable art that is portraying each vice. Due to the

restrictions of Covid 19, I'm unable to display them as I would in a studio or gallery and have relied on the photographs to portray my work.

## TEACHING

My art making involves a great deal of experimentation using a variety of materials, and a lot of trial and error. I encourage my students to do the same. I aim to push their artistic boundaries, get them to try something new/difficult/unconventional and out of their comfort zone. I emphasize that there is no failure in art. Many projects become a way to solve problems and experiment with solutions to create the concepts being taught.

Light Painting Photography is a unit that teaches my students a variety of lessons from technique to art history to designing their composition and rethinking or adjusting their ideas. I incorporate creative problem solving, teamwork, the science of how the camera works with light, as well as the history of light painting. This is also a unit that students really enjoy and can try on their own using their camera or phone if it has a camera.

The Light Painting Photography unit starts by talking about how a camera works, mainly focusing on the sensor inside the camera that absorbs light when you take a picture and the shutter that lets the light in when you take a picture. I review the concept of long exposure photography. We talk about shutter speed, how fast the shutter opens and closes which determines how long the sensor has to absorb light. The longer the shutter is open, the more light can be absorbed by the sensor. Also, when the shutter is open for a long period of time, it creates blurred motion.

Once the students have basic knowledge of how these parts of the camera work, we move on to the concept of Light Painting Photography, which is taking a long

exposure photo and using a moving light source in a dark space. We review historic information about Light Painting being used in physics in the late 1800s by George Demeny and Etienne-Jules Marey. We also review artists who used or experimented with Light Painting Photography such as Man Ray and Pablo Picasso.

Videos is presented so they can see how Light Painting Photography works and how to create interesting photos using this technique. I then review examples from professional photographers to show the class how they created an interesting composition using Light Painting Photography. I include examples of past students' work which shows the class that students have had success with the technique. We review the different types of equipment they will be able to use when creating their photos, the different lights and how to add color to the light.

The students are then tasked to come up with a minimum of 4 ideas to create. Students are asked to write out a description as well as make a drawing for each of their ideas. They will need to write about the different equipment they will need to use for each idea, if they are writing a word, making shapes, or creating a scene, how many people will be involved in each photo, and if they are using different colors. When students have their plans finished, we go to the auditorium to start taking photos. Once we start taking photos and students see the images and experiment with the light, they start reworking and adjusting how they create the image.

Along with technique, art history, designing a composition and adjusting ideas, I feel that this lesson teaches students to think flexibly, be persistent, and used creative problem solving. Similar to my artistic process, students come up with ideas and decide

the materials needed. Once they start making the art they have to adjust their original ideas to create a composition they are happy with. They also learn that their initial work may not have come out the way they wanted, but they learn from it, do more planning, and can then create a new photo based on what they learned.

My classrooms are a collaborative experience and process for my students. I recognize that my students all have unique skill sets and abilities and they all interpret what they see from their own perspective. While most projects in my class are individual works, students share ideas with each other. I find that students have learned to trust the process and have become much more accepting of others' ideas. This has allowed many of my students to become more expressive artistically but also verbally in the classroom. Through art discussions and project presentations, students learn to verbally express the meaning and artistic choices they made while creating their work.

In the future I want to provide my students with a lot of found materials for them to use creatively. I hope to provide an environment in my classroom where students feel safe to escape the rest of their hectic day and enjoy art. I hope to encourage students to use art as their escape, teach an effective coping skill that is art making.

My studio investigation will influence my pedagogical approach in the way I interact with my students and manage my classroom. Each lesson accommodates multiple learning styles. I include a verbal overview of the lesson, video and PowerPoint explanations, examples, as well as time for questions and answers to make sure students understand the concept and what is expected during the project. I provide individual encouragement when I am walking around the classroom and observing student progress.

In my classroom, I encourage positive peer feedback. Students are able to share their work with each other and ask one another for advice. I strive to be consciously flexible throughout the lesson so I can shift focus or method as I am teaching. This helps when teaching students of different artistic abilities. Being able to provide extra help to a student that is struggling with a concept while also providing more challenging work for students that have grasped the concept at a faster pace.

I think it is important to treat each student as an individual. As a teacher, we don't always know what is hiding behind our students' mask. We need to understand the emotion behind the smile to better understand what they are bringing to the classroom each day. My hope is to create a place for students to be creative and a safe space for them to take off or at least lift their mask.

## CONCLUSION

Art is emotional for me. My art is meant to share a feeling and perspective I have for the subject I am creating. I try to share my emotion through my artwork with a hope that someone will see and ponder the message. I strive to make art that will provoke the viewer ask questions. 'Happy Faces' was a creation made to display the many faces of vice.

The research performed during this thesis lead me to many artists who share the same intent as I do. Starting with Dada artists and the use or 'Ready-mades', I found that most of my art would not be considered art if they had not taken a bold stance. The Dada message was very politically motivated but was done using found and manufactured 'ready-made' materials similar to my process. While my message is emotional versus political, the method is similar. The Dada artist paved the way for many artists who came after them, many of which are highlighted in my thesis. But more importantly, they paved the way for me as an artist. The type of artwork I create is accepted in the artistic community because of their passion and willingness to break the boundaries into new ways of expressing themselves.

My thesis work involved a great deal of experimentation with a wide variety of materials and structures. While all experiments did not provide the outcome desired, there was a great deal of learning involved. My trial and error continued as I needed to insure both form and function were fit for purpose. This is a process I will continue to champion to my students. There is no failure when there are ideas, desire and effort. This will lead to continued exploration, creative problem solving and learning.

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